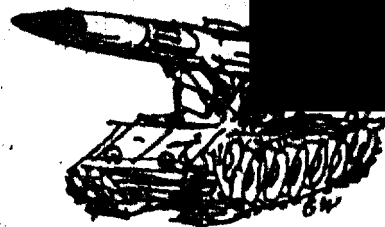


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AT HOME & ABROAD



Where the Missile Gap Went

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ply system. While hundreds of Russians and Czechs were known to be working alongside Cuban government officials, particularly in the armed forces, the outright assumption of government posts by Chinese functionaries came as a distinct surprise even in Cuba. It also brought a flurry of conjecture that the Chinese-Russian ideological conflict had been extended to Cuba.

The Balance Is Shifting

On December 1 Castro told interviewers, "I am a Marxist-Leninist," and claimed to have been one since his student days. Perhaps, finally realizing that the organization was getting ahead of him, he was trying to establish his Communist credentials in order to buttress his position as leader of a Communist country. Whatever his reasons may have been, Castro's newly declared devotion to Communism did not please the Communists. His remarks were not reported in the Cuban press, and all references to his Communist background were deleted from the press published in *Bohemia* magazine. Furthermore, recent speeches by Roca and Anibal Escalante have hammered away at the need for party loyalty and democratic centralism and have attacked the cult of personality and the "vivas, songs, and slogans" of Fidelismo.

If the current measures of indoctrination and repression carried on by ORI give any evidence of success, the way will be cleared for the creation, probably later this year, of a more formal political organization. In a frankly Communist presentation over a TV program called *Cuba, Ianza*, Anibal Escalante referred to "the final step"—the establishment of the United Party of the Revolution (PUR). He said that although ORI could be considered the intermediate step to the PUR, they were actually one and the same. It was merely a matter of "transition." The PUR will then take the place of ORI as the political base of Communist power in Cuba.

When this happens, Castro may begin to count the days he will rule as the "maximum leader" of the Cuban revolution. At this point the Communists still need Castro, but not as much as Castro needs the Communists.

THE TERM "missile gap," so far as I know, was coined by a well-known newspaperman several years ago. It meant that the Russians were ahead of us in developing and building intercontinental ballistic missiles, which they would have in significant numbers before we did. It was thought that this situation would continue for a long time because this country had failed to put enough effort into developing long-range ballistic missiles. But the missile gap, from the day it became a matter of public concern, had an unaccountable way of narrowing, closing, and occasionally vanishing altogether.

Sometimes this was accomplished simply by official pronouncements. Sometimes, as in 1959, it was accomplished by adding unmanned bombers to our predicted stockpile of ICBMs while making no compensating addition to the predicted Soviet stockpile. Needless to say, the missile gap could not be so easily disposed of. Former Vice-President Nixon's assurance in 1959 that the gap was narrowing was followed by former CIA Director Allen Dulles's testimony in 1960 that the Soviets were widening their lead.

IN RECENT MONTHS, however, the missile gap appears to have been done away with once and for all. Not only is there no gap, we are informed by the press, but there never was one, and those who said there was were guilty at best of hallucination and at worst of something like bad faith. Consigning the mis-

sile gap to the "limbo of synthetic issues where it always belonged," a New York Times editorial not long ago declared, "The same forces and the same Congressional and journalistic mouthpieces who manufactured an alleged bomber gap in the Nineteen Fifties sponsored, and indeed invented, the alleged missile gap in the Nineteen Sixties." A somewhat unusual rewriting of history was provided by William Stringer in the *Christian Science Monitor*: "... the old missile gap never existed except in speculation—and in politics," he wrote, reinforcing this claim with the information that Presidential candidate Kennedy, "with an eye to accuracy, referred very sparingly to the missile gap. What he mainly discussed, in his campaign speech to the American Legion convention at Miami Beach, October 18, 1960, and elsewhere, was what might be termed the vulnerability gap." By my count, Mr. Kennedy warned of the missile gap in no less than nine campaign speeches just among those which have been reprinted. To the American Legion convention in Miami Beach, he in fact quoted General Maxwell D. Taylor's statement, "We are now threatened with a missile gap that leaves us in a position of potentially grave danger."

Whether or not there was a missile gap, it is clear that President Kennedy believed there was. So for that matter did former Secretaries of Defense McElroy and Gates and Governor Nelson Rockefeller, among others. Relying on authoritative